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TEXTURAL TECHNIQUES AS USED IN FOUR
CONTEMPORARY STILL-LIFE PAINTINGS

A Report of a Creative Project
Presented to
The Graduate Division
Drake University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

by
E. Jeanne Lighter
June 1965

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints.

Henry James¹

Textural techniques of contemporary paintings cover an infinite range of possibilities. The artist of today is not bound by traditional rules and fetishes that were once easily acquired and left unquestioned. There is no reason why a beautifully shaped mahogany palette must be used, neither is there a reason why paint should not be mixed on the marble slab table top or on the side of an old tea chest. The creative principles of the Nineteenth century were re-asserted by the Twentieth century artists realizing that the most effective art is the most unique and communicative. Anything is right when experience leads to an imaginative sympathy for materials.² The same five-inch brush ordinarily used to paint barns may be used today without

¹Alexander Eliot, Three Hundred Years of American Paintings (New York: Time Incorporated, 1957), p. 115.

²Laurence Self, "Vision and Action," The Artist, LXVIII (October 1964), 8-10.

hesitation if it is required to get the desired effect on the artist's canvas. Refreshing techniques may be obtained by equally unusual methods, and the finished painting may be a true credit to the artist. The artist is his own judge, and governed only by his own sense responses, reflecting intuitively his environment or his speculation of his imaginative horizons.

It is generally realized that the language of modern painters had become a great deal more complex than the language used before 1875, speaking in terms of tones, tints, and chiaroscuro.¹

To visualize a more complete picture of the birth of today's art, it will be helpful to go back to the earliest art known to man. The cave paintings (Figure 1) of Lascaux in Montignac, France and Altamira, Spain, c. 25,000-10,000 B.C. were created with the limited materials at hand by the Cro Magnon hunters. Pads of fur or feathers and small sticks were used where refined, graduated brushes are used today. Red and yellow ochre clay, ground and possibly mixed with water, fish oil, honey, or blood resulted in a binding medium with properties similar to the oils used today. They were, however, inherently limited in spectrum. The flat,

¹Peter Coker, "The Language of Painting," The Artist, LXVIII (October 1964), 13-16.



Figure 1. BLACK BULL. (Detail of a cave painting)
c. 15,000-10,000 B.C., Lascaux, France.

smooth, thin application was the basis of primitive paintings. Wood charcoal possibly was used to compose the outline or complete monochrome underpaintings of bison and reindeer. Vivid earthy colors were achieved by glazes flowed or blown from hollow cylindrical bones, over the monochrome.¹ Simple? yes, yet these crude paintings, creations of the Ice Age--thousands of years past, are still appreciated for their fascinating design. With variations, these styles are often suggested in renowned contemporary paintings.

As painting became more sensitive and realistic, artists invented variations by painting into glazes and applying impastos. Confidence grew and the direct method developed, as with Hals and Velasquez, who painted in the 1600's during the Baroque period in Europe. The more technically sound practice of underpainting persisted, however, in artists like Rubens, who also used glazes, scumpled, impastos, and clever brushstrokes.

The link before the Impressionists (who led the way to our present day type of art), was greatly weakened by a French painter, Courbet, who painted realistically. Yet he

¹Kurt Herberts, The Complete Book of Artist Techniques (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger Publishers, 1960), p. 25.

made knife painting popular, adding a new textural technique (Figure 2). Turner, Constable, and Delacroix (1800's), were also instrumental in bringing about the change from the more or less set styles. Regardless of method, the proper application is exceedingly important. Many artists became important, and the desire for novel effects grew. The exploration of unsound methods was employed, but usually gave way to the sound step by step development, in order for the artist to gain control of his media. Velázquez, for example, first painted solid, rather dull studies to gain the necessary control that later allowed him great freedom. Hals sometimes had a careful monochrome painting under the free looking brush strokes, or would build up his painting from a series of drawing strokes in paint until it looked like a flatly applied application. It may be helpful to recall here that Rembrandt and Leonardo were masters of paint and patience. Rembrandt's (1600's--Baroque art in Europe) works were heavy and knobby from painting and repainting. Leonardo (1400's--Renaissance) painted and repainted the "Mona Lisa" over a period of years. Eventually, the old masters worked out a formula for predetermined eye paths to facilitate visual transition and movements. This formula, with variations, was used in numerous paintings, with which it would agree. To increase out-put, Raphael and Rubens (1500-1600)



Figure 2. LA REMISE DES CHEVREUILS by Courbet.

operated picture "factories" with an "assembly-line" process. The results were repetition of subject matter and facsimilies. Modern artists realized that technique is not something to be promiscuously borrowed. Not all manipulation can be used indiscriminately, and the most logical application for the character of the picture should be used, that best fills a certain need.

Dominant artists in the Post-Impressionist movement (1880's to 1900's) were Cézanne, Seurat, Van Gogh, and Gauguin.¹ The contemporary accent on individual expression resulted in a greater diversity of artistic expression than previously found in art of that time. Cézanne was concerned with the principle deficiencies of structural loss and organization for new surface description. He considered pictorial form more important than forms of nature, and became the forerunner for Cubism and other abstract forms of this century.² (Figure 3).

Seurat originated a style called pointillism, using divided brush strokes of complementary colors. (Figure 4).

¹François Mathey, The Impressionists (New York: Fredrick Praeger Publishers, 1961), p. 135.

²Nathaniel Pousette-Dart, American Painting Today (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1956), p. 10.



Figure 3. FRUIT BOWL, GLASS AND APPLES by Paul Cézanne.

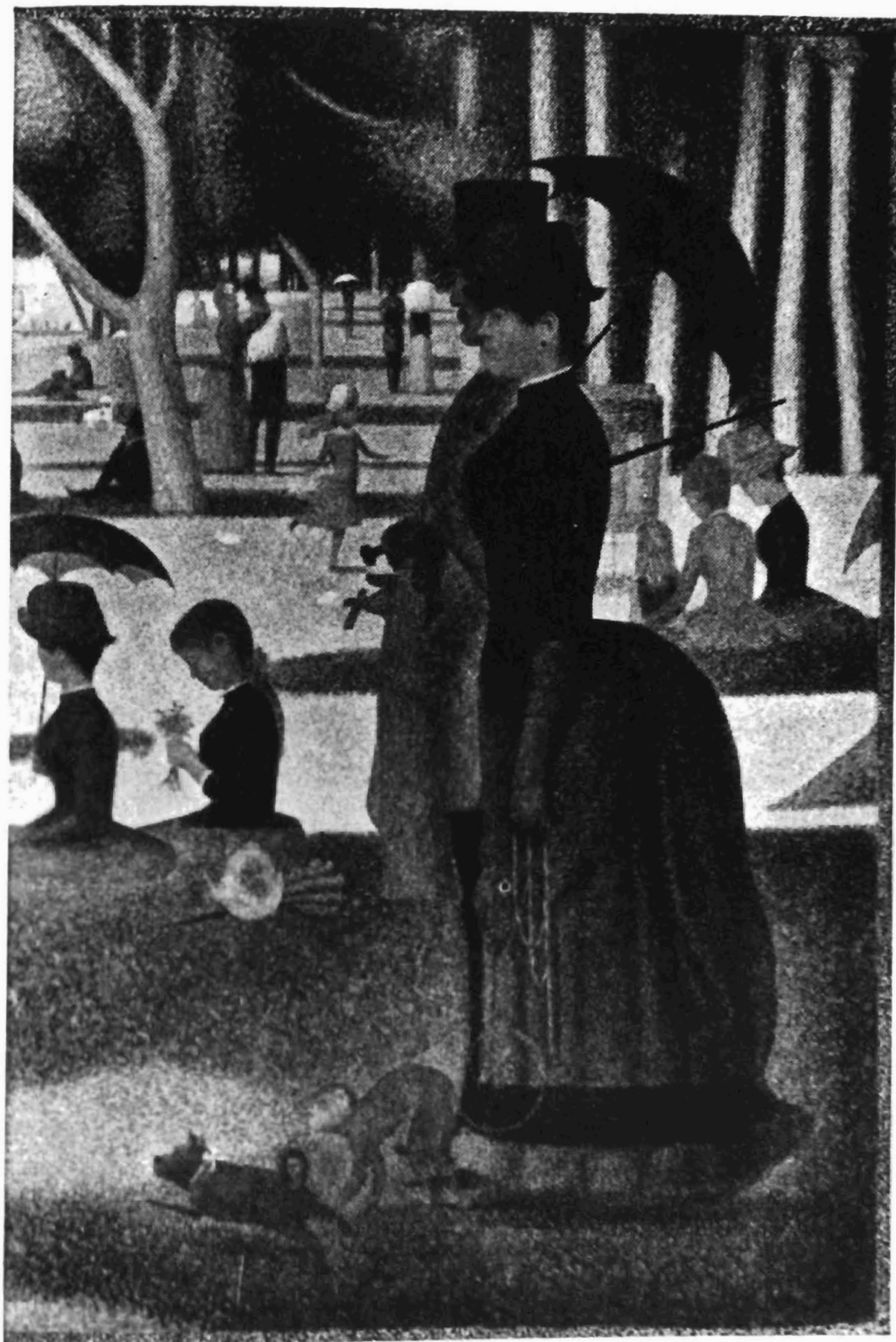


Figure 4. SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE ISLAND OF THE GRANDE JATTE by Georges Seurat.

Van Gogh developed a highly personalized style exaggerating the organic forces of nature by using great heavy swirls of paint to depict movement. Gauguin was influential on twentieth century art, and was recognized by the Fauvist group as having reached many of the goals of modernism in art. He used moderate distortion of shapes, heavy outlines, and shadowless simplicity.

The new growth of art expression in the twentieth century was vivid and highly charged. New artists were eagerly exploring the previously unknown artistic sensations. In spite of the general trend of freedom and color, a few artists continued the traditional style of French and Italian art. Matisse, Utrillo, Derian, and Modigliani were artists holding to classic order and subtle modeling of form.

Cubism is recognized as the beginning of abstract art, but Spanish-born Pablo Picasso, and George Braque (French), occupying the same studio for a number of years, are the two major artists in the development of pure abstraction.¹ Their exploration, due to dissatisfactions in volume, space, structure, and external characteristic resulted in new emphasis on the intrinsic quality of line, shape value, texture, and color. Braque's inventive inclusion of tex-

¹Hugo Munsterberg, Twentieth Century Painting (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), pp. 8-34.

tural foreign materials attached to the canvas, added to the repertoire of contemporary surface texture. (Figure 5). The figure is an excellent example of oil and sand on canvas. The texture has been combed in the wood area to give it a grain effect.¹

In 1912 Picasso added still another form of art which combines painting and collage, similar to papier collé, except that in collage, drawing and painting may be combined to give the desired effect. His first composition of this type is "Still Life With Chair Caning" (Figure 6). A piece of oilcloth, printed to simulate chair caning, was affixed to the canvas on which he was painting a still-life.

Braque used mirror glass, photographs, and other extraneous materials in his oil paintings. This method, extended by the cubist painters, is called "assemblage" which is a work of art made by fastening together cut or torn pieces of paper, newspaper clippings, photographs, cloth, fragments of wood, metal, stones, shells, knives, forks, tables, chairs, parts of dolls, automobile fenders, parts of machines or stuffed birds or other such materials.

In cubist painting, moreover, and often in collage as well, the ambiguously beautiful device of passage--a final attempt to soften the shock of discontinuity--

¹John Richardson, G. Braque (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1961), pl. 43.



Figure 5. STUDIO WITH BLACK VASE by George Braque.

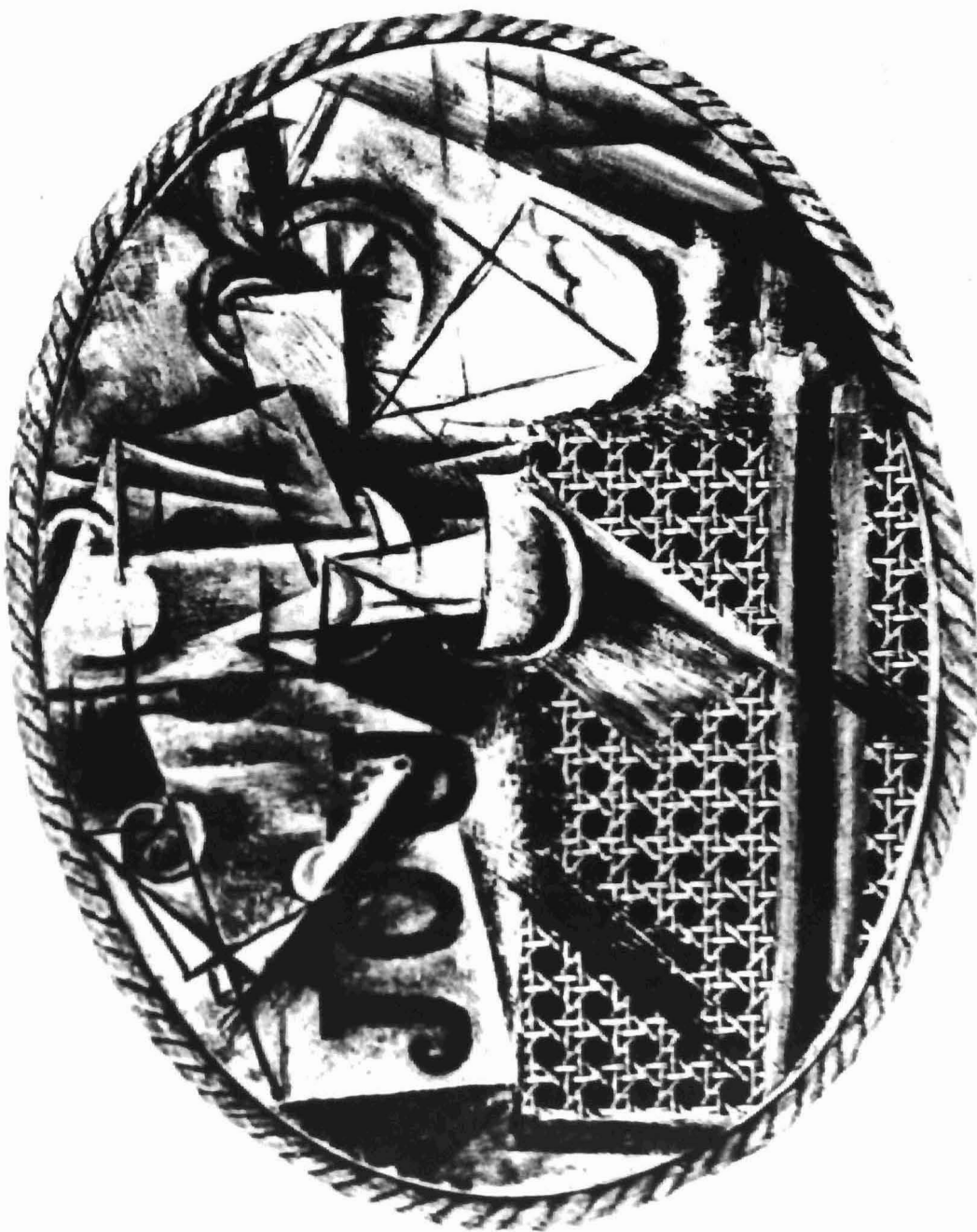


Figure 6. STILL LIFE WITH CHAIR CANING by Pablo Picasso.

tends to bridge disassociations of image. The method of assemblage, which is post cubists, is that of juxtaposition: setting one thing beside the other without connective.¹

Assemblage has developed erratically but rapidly since 1912 and recently among the younger artists using unorthodox media.² By 1915 the Italian futurists and the dadaists were making ironic, amusing and startling objects, symbolizing their attack on traditional art.³

New artistic adventures rapidly gained momentum after World War Two. Designers of buildings, furniture, clothing, and of all of life's areas, were affected and influenced by the abstract concepts. By the end of the 1940's, the last ties with tradition were renounced, and were replaced with a mixture of abstraction, surrealism, and expressionism.⁴

Is abstract art a form of escapism? Is surrealism an escape into a world of fantasy? While art of this type is narrow, it is also deep. It has sacrificed associative

¹William C. Seitz, The Art of Assemblage (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1961), p. 25.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Otto G. Ocvirk and others, Art Fundamentals: Theory and Practice (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1962), p. 148.

values to try to speak the language of pure form.¹

From the textural methods employed traditionally to the more experimental moderns, it might seem that the cycle has been completed, but as in all things some one will always think of a new type of painting.

¹Lee Nordas, (ed.) Art USA Now, I (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 139.

CHAPTER II

VARIOUS GROUNDS AND SURFACES FOR DIFFERENT PICTORIAL NEEDS

Inasmuch as textural varieties are the main concern of the research for this thesis, textures will be referred to as; (1) actual, having tactile qualities; (2) simulated, copying of light and dark patterns; and (3) inventive, decorative patterns (e.g. Picasso). The type of foundation or support and ground will vary directly with the type of texture the artist wishes to achieve. Also, the permanence of a painting depends on the bond that is established between the foundation and the ground.

The conventional canvas foundation with a painting ground of Liquitex gesso is most commonly used by artists today. It allows an adhesion of considerable strength. Depending on the pictorial needs, one or more coats can be applied to achieve the desired surface. Liquitex color, oil, and casein are all compatible with the gesso ground.

In selecting canvas a number of things should be considered. For several reasons linen makes the most ideal canvas for oil painting. The flax fiber is oily and keeps the fabric "alive," providing a surface suitable for any method of painting. The average life of linen canvas is

twice that of cotton. Irish linen or imported linen is best, as the domestic flax is too soft. The best linen canvases are described as Double Prime, meaning smooth; Single Prime, meaning medium coarse; and Rough, meaning particularly rough weave. Cotton or duck of various grades makes fine surfaces for painting, but is easily attacked by slight climatic changes; shrinking and expanding according to the humidity. It is less expensive than linen and used mostly by amateurs and students because posterity is not usually considered by members of this group. If one really wanted to save his works for posterity, the new alluminum canvas may have the problem solved--it can neither burn nor deteriorate with age. The alluminum canvas is still very new and no first-hand tests were conducted for this thesis. Back to the older canvases, jute canvas becomes brittle and lifeless in a relatively short time, lasting only a few generations. It is largely used for murals, but if used on stretchers, it is recommended that the back be protected with a coat of paint.¹

The canvas support with a gesso ground provides a very satisfactory surface for the type of technique often

¹C. B. Moore, Oil Painting Materials and Methods (U.S.A.: Devoe and Reynolds Co., 1947), p. 23.

used by Van Gogh. Most of his work was of this type, created in actual texture by applying oil pigment directly from the tube to the canvas, and using a palette knife to scrape areas of the canvas bare, leaving tiny ridges of paint. (Figure 7).

The gesso ground on canvas is equally compatible with Liquitex color and casein used as the medium, and equally good for fine simulated or inventive textures. It was also found to be most satisfactory for the experiments conducted using oil pigment mixed with inert foreign materials prior to conducting the final creative projects for the thesis.

Masonite and plywood are widely used today with a Liquitex gesso ground for painting as well as other art expressions. If a fine simulated texture is the desire of the artist, several coats of gesso can be applied to the panel, and sanded after each application with a fine sandpaper. If the reader has time, he may wish to try the method taught by an art instructor at Drake University in 1963. The project was an egg tempera on a panel. The panel was given an application of glue on both sides using rabbit-skin glue. This was made by mixing $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. glue to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water, and letting it stand twelve hours. That is the time needed for the glue to expand and absorb the water. The glue was then put in a double boiler and heated, but not to the boil-

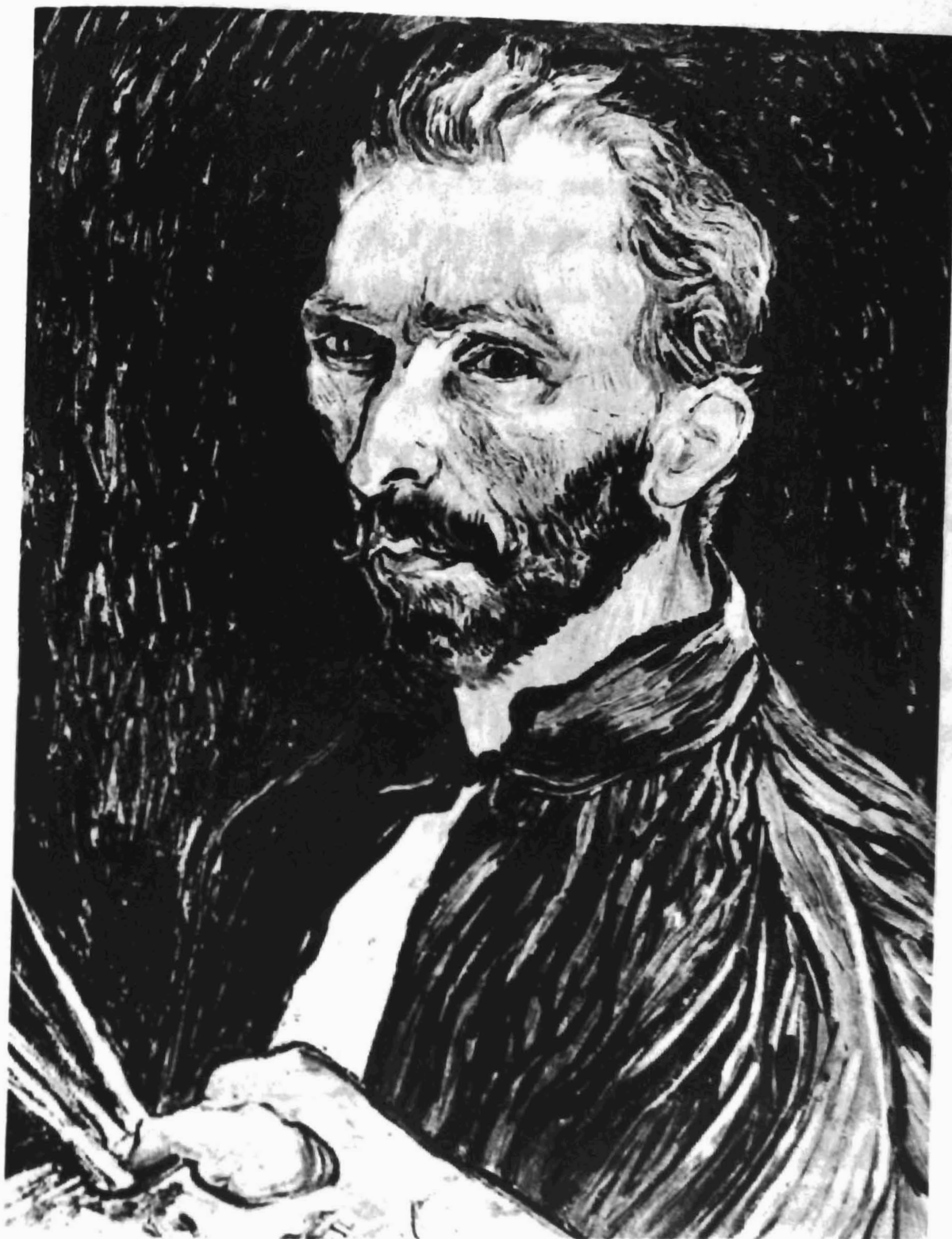


Figure 7. SELF-PORTRAIT 1889 by Vincent van Gogh.

ing point. The panel was first sanded on both sides to remove any traces of oil from handling. Equal parts of powdered gesso and water were mixed and this also soaked for twelve hours. The mixture was heated slowly and extreme caution taken not to stir in bubbles. While the gesso was still warm, it was brushed on one side of the panel in one direction. Three to five coats were given, and the direction reversed after each coat. The surface was sanded with a fine sandpaper after each coat, using a circular motion and then burnished with a soft cloth to make it shine. Red conté crayon was used to make a carbon paper to transfer the drawing onto the board.

An excellent example of simulated texture by a noted local artist is in some of the work of Professor Stanley Hess of Drake University. With absolutely no foreign texture added to the paint, an eighth of an inch build-up or mold of a particular subject is made with gesso or molding plastic, which, when dry, is sanded, smoothed, and then covered over with paint (polymer). Then the work began; with minutely fine cross-hatch brush strokes, barely discernable to the naked eye, he created a predetermined simulated texture with light and dark color patterns. The painting created has the illusion of being textural, but in actuality has a glass-smooth surface.

Historically, this simulated texture was introduced by Jan Van Eyck, a Flemish painter in the 1400's who was noted for painting rich fabric variations as well as texture such as fur, silk, glass, and polished metal, which invoked a tactile response. Flemish painting was done especially on altarpieces and easel pictures during the late Gothic or early Renaissance period.

Many of Picasso's pictures contain examples of invented texture by use of striped and circular patterns. Although his paintings of this type were two-dimensional, and without tactile pretension, they may or may not have been derived from some texture.

Using either Masonite or plywood as a foundation, a ground of gesso may be built up, and the texture transferred by pressing objects into it while it is still wet. Also, the gesso can be allowed to dry, then by use of tools, carved furrows and ridges can be created, which gives an actual texture or relief surface before painting. Plastic, plastic wood, and wood filler may be employed in a similar manner.

Cardboard or sand paper may be used with fair results as foundations for painting. Lack of permanency is an inherent drawback to the use of these materials.

If a canvas foundation is desired, but the composition

needs rigidity, canvas can be secured with glue to masonite. This would make a very fine surface for extreme textures. A masonite foundation with a gesso ground also is very satisfactory for heavy texture or low reliefs, such as might be necessary for the painting-collage combination or assemblage which seems to be gaining momentum at present.

Some artists prefer using the pre-mixed form of white-lead diluted with turpentine or linseed oil. The results are very satisfactory. If the artist is allergic to white-lead, chances are he will not be bothered if the application is made in a well ventilated garage or out-of-doors.

Casein is commonly considered inferior to gesso as a ground because of its greater tendency to crumble if not properly applied. Therefore tests were not made with casein as a ground.

CHAPTER III

MEDIA AND FOREIGN MATERIALS

I. AGENTS WITH WHICH PIGMENTS ARE MIXED

Personal preference must be left to the artist in his choice of oils, driers, and varnishes. The general opinion or safe rule, as far as permanency goes, is to use as little oil or varnish as possible in picture composition. Properly prepared linseed, poppy, and stand oils are free of lead and artificial driers and are therefore safe to mix with oil pigments. There is usually enough oil pigment as it comes from the tube to overcome sealing or rubbing when thinned with turpentine. The slow drying transparent colors, however, are likely to crack. The normal drying time of oil pigment alone is a week or more. When paint is used from the tube without oils and mediums, heavy brush marks do not permit detail work. Turpentine added will cause paint to dry thin and flat, which is often desired for the first coat on a canvas when more than one coat is to be used. To enable the colors to flow easily and smoothly, linseed oil, or poppy oil may be added. Of the two, poppy oil dries more slowly. Pale drying oil contains a small amount of dryer and is therefore generally used (one part with three

parts of turpentine).

Stand oil is linseed oil heated to 550° F, and held at that temperature several hours to polymerize or thicken. When thinned with several times its bulk, it is an excellent glazing or painting medium. It is paler than linseed oil, and does not yellow as much with age.¹

Oils increase ten to twenty per cent in volume in drying with resultant wrinkling if an excess is used.²

A permanent gloss may be achieved by using an alkyd synthetic resinous varnish as a medium mixed with oil pigments.³ This type of picture varnish has the good qualities of the old-fashioned varnishes but without the undesirable darkening effects. Also, it is less likely to cause cracking. It may be used to varnish over a completed painting. There are, however, a number of types of picture varnishes under various brand names available today. The artist should be cautious in making his selection, because of the varied degrees of permanency.

II. OCCASIONAL INCLUSION OF INERT FOREIGN MATERIAL

The occasional inclusion of inert foreign material

¹C. B. Moore, Oil Painting: Materials and Methods (U.S.A.: Devoe and Reynolds, Inc., 1947), p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 36.

³Ibid., p. 38.

that may be integrated with oils are sand, sawdust, wood shavings, marble dust, finely crushed limestone, glass, and seeds. These are but a few that could be used. An excellent example (Figure 8) of stone included as a foreign material was shown recently in the Contemporary Japanese Painting show at the Des Moines Art Center. Entitled "Work 63-469," this painting by Motonaga Sadamasa is an enamel and stone on canvas over board.

Among other artists who have created pictures using both paint and inert foreign materials are Jules Kirshenbaum, Artist in Residence at the Des Moines Art Center. His experiments included the use of gold leaf on nails among other things on canvas along with the usual paint.

Byron Burford, Iowa University Professor of Art and a noted artist, presently has a very fine painting at the Des Moines Art Center using both foreign material and paint.

III. GLAZES AND SCUMBLES

Edward Betts has conducted some unique experiments with glazes. He has created pictures using colored inks, wax crayons, felt tipped pens, sand, metallic powders, and marble dust on untempered masonite panels. The panels were prepared first with two or three coats of gesso for a ground. He describes his work as being different from the conven-



Figure 8. WORK 63-469 by Motonaga Sadamasa (Contemporary Japanese Painting).

tional collage inasmuch as the final effect of the picture surface is simply that of a painting. The spectator is not aware that collage material has been integrated into the picture. Polymer paint has been put on haphazardly without any preconceived plan. The main idea is to establish color and shape to stimulate creative ideas, and serve as an underpainting for subsequent paint applications. A glaze of polymer medium and water temporarily appears milky, but dries clear and smooth. Into this, dark lines are drawn freely and improvisationally, followed by another application of polymer and water mixture. The collage elements are introduced, and sealed under another film of the polymer glaze. This process of glazing is repeated several times. The brilliance and depth achieved with this type of glaze is attainable in almost no other media. Tube caseins and colored inks are added to the color mixtures. Included in the works are construction paper, tissue paper, rice paper, onionskin, typing paper and plastic fiber papers.¹

A number of local artists interested in collage as well as painting art expressions have found picture varnish to be useful as a glaze.

¹Edward Betts, "Painting In Polymer and Mixed Media," American Artist, XXVIII (October 1964), 34-39.

CHAPTER IV

APPLICATION OF RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION

I am a part of all that I have met.

Tennyson in *Ulysses*¹

Once this particular creative project was decided upon, the task of experimenting began. After the oil pigment, the chosen media, was mixed with various amounts of all the foreign material previously mentioned, separate applications were made on canvas with a painting ground of Liquitex gesso. Either a palette knife or brush was used depending on the density. Special note was taken of the types of texture created by each.

Plans for the project of four contemporary still-lives were then drawn and redrawn. After deciding upon four differing types, the next problem was where the texture should be applied, how much texture should be applied, and which texture best filled the need. It was decided that three would be created using foreign materials either mixed completely or partially with the pigment or secured on top of the pre-determined areas. The fourth picture would be a built-up

¹Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Ulysses* (Vol. I of *Tennyson's Poetical Works*; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1896), pp. 209-211.

composition on masonite, creating a low relief texture with the pigment on top.

DROUTH, Figure 9, is the first original still-life to be considered. It is comprised of bones, flower pots, bottles, and catalpa tree bean pods. It was reproduced to scale from the original drawing using vine charcoal on a 28 x 36 inch canvas with Liquitex gesso for the painting ground. Because of the nature of the drawing suggesting a desert scene, earthy light and dark warm colors of ochre, brown, and orange were predominantly used to invoke a sense of drouth. Variety was basically achieved through cool accents; hues of light and dark blue, aqua, and lime green. The pigment was applied flat and with a minimum of brush strokes being apparent. Texture was then applied, with a palette knife as shading. Oil pigment was mixed with sand where a fine texture was desired, sawdust crushed limestone was used in areas where a heavier texture was needed. Dry seeds mixed with oil pigment were used to build up the contour of the bean pods. A small amount of Japanese drier was mixed with each of the foreign materials to shorten the drying time. Japanese drier is made with oxides of lead and manganese, and has a tendency to make a more brittle film. Therefore, this was mixed very sparingly with a recommended medium of one part damar varnish, five parts turpentine, and a few



Figure 9. DROUTH. An original oil by E. Jeanne Lighter.
Sand, sawdust, seeds, and oil on canvas.

drops of stand oil. This can be mixed and kept in a container ready for use. Stand oil is preferred to linseed oil inasmuch as it does not yellow as much with age. An additional application of paint was given to the background using a slight variation in intensity, allowing brush strokes to remain.

WONTED MODE, Figures 10 and 11, was so named because a still-life so often constitutes drapery, bottles, vases, apples, and dried vegetation. The necessary preliminary steps, as in the first painting considered, were taken using a heavy application of gesso on the canvas foundation surface. The object of the experiment was to see if added texture would enhance the intrinsic values of a picture using chiaroscuro and controlled modelling. Chiaroscuro is an Italian term literally meaning light-dark, blending light and shade on objects and in the space described in a composition. Oil pigment, sand, and varnish were mixed together and stippled on in thin scumble like application in the area representing the table. Heavier texture on the larger vase was secured by again using added sand to the pigment, but this time as much sand was used as the pigment could conceal. This mixture was applied with palette knife. It should be noted that the underpainting need not be fresh to enable the mixture of pigment and inert materials to adhere.

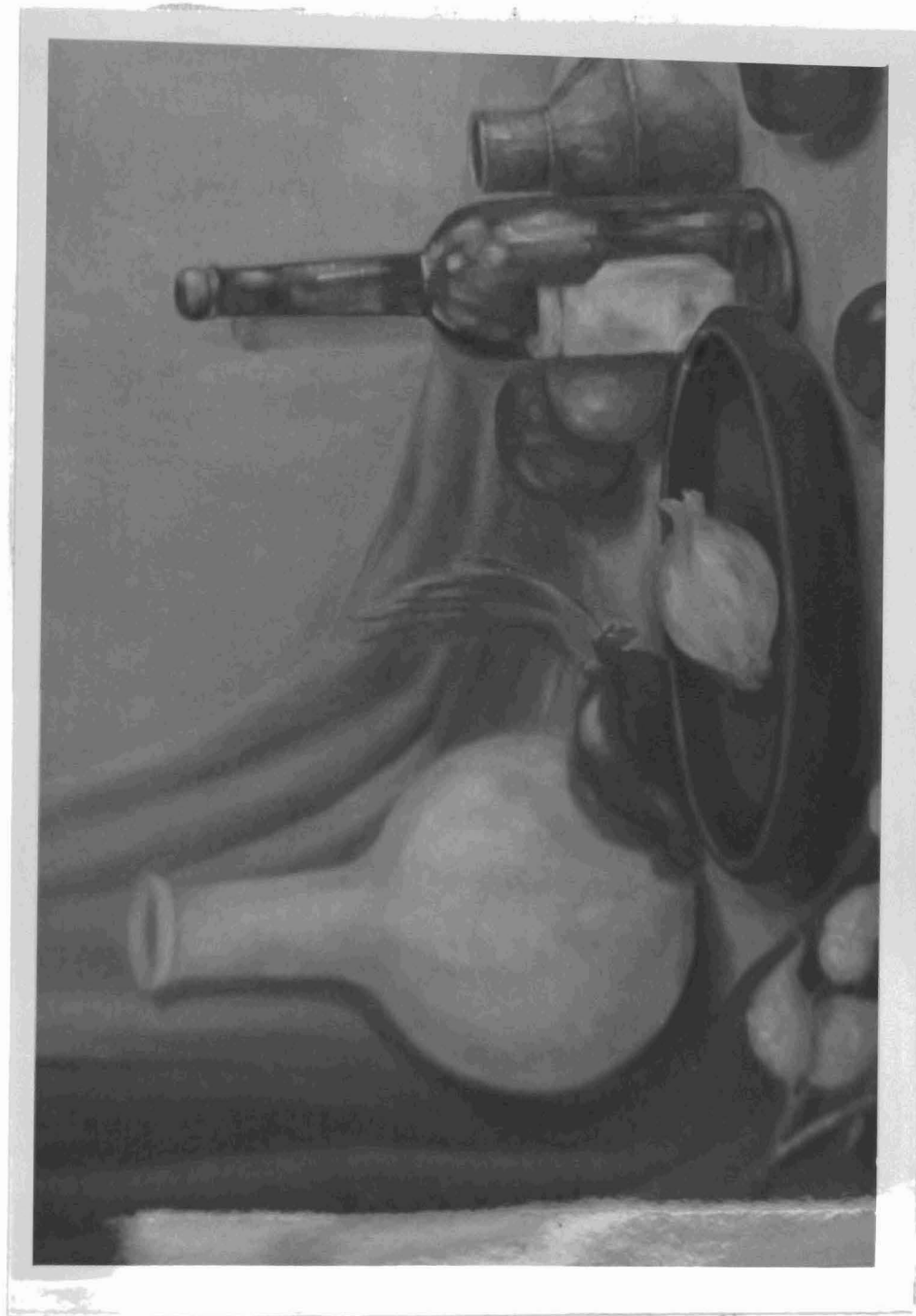


Figure 10. WONTED MODE. An original oil by E. Jeanne Lighter.
Oil on canvas, before texture.



Figure 11. WONTED MODE. An original oil by E. Jeanne Lighter. Sawdust, sand, lacquer, and oil on canvas.

Japanese drier was used sparingly in the heavier mixtures throughout, but in this picture Taubes varnish was also added. On the milk weed pods in the foreground, coarse walnut wood sawdust or shavings were mixed with the pigment for a first application. A second application was made leaving the walnut shavings partially exposed for added textural effect. See the completed picture (Figure 11).

PEACHES AND GREEN--PITCHERS AND PURPLE (Figures 12 and 13) is an abstract oil painting on canvas, (30 x 24 inches) of a pitcher, bottle, vase, milk weed pods and peaches. The colors are light and dark blue, light and dark green, light and dark purple, yellow, and orange applied flat, purely for decorative effect. Over-all dark purple areas, small broken chips and pieces of purple glass tile have been glued, using a thin application of one of the common clear-drying emulsified glues. It was planned that the placement of the purple textured areas would accent a pre-determined eye path facilitating a circular visual transition. See (Figure 13) the finished picture.

MONOCHROME IN DEPTH (Figures 14 and 15) is completely different from the other three experiments, yet in keeping with the problem of textural techniques. The idea for such an experiment was conceived while viewing the Contemporary Japanese Painting exhibition at the Des Moines Art Center.



Figure 12. PEACHES AND GREEN--PITCHERS AND PURPLE.
An original oil by E. Jeanne Lighter. Oil on canvas, before texture.

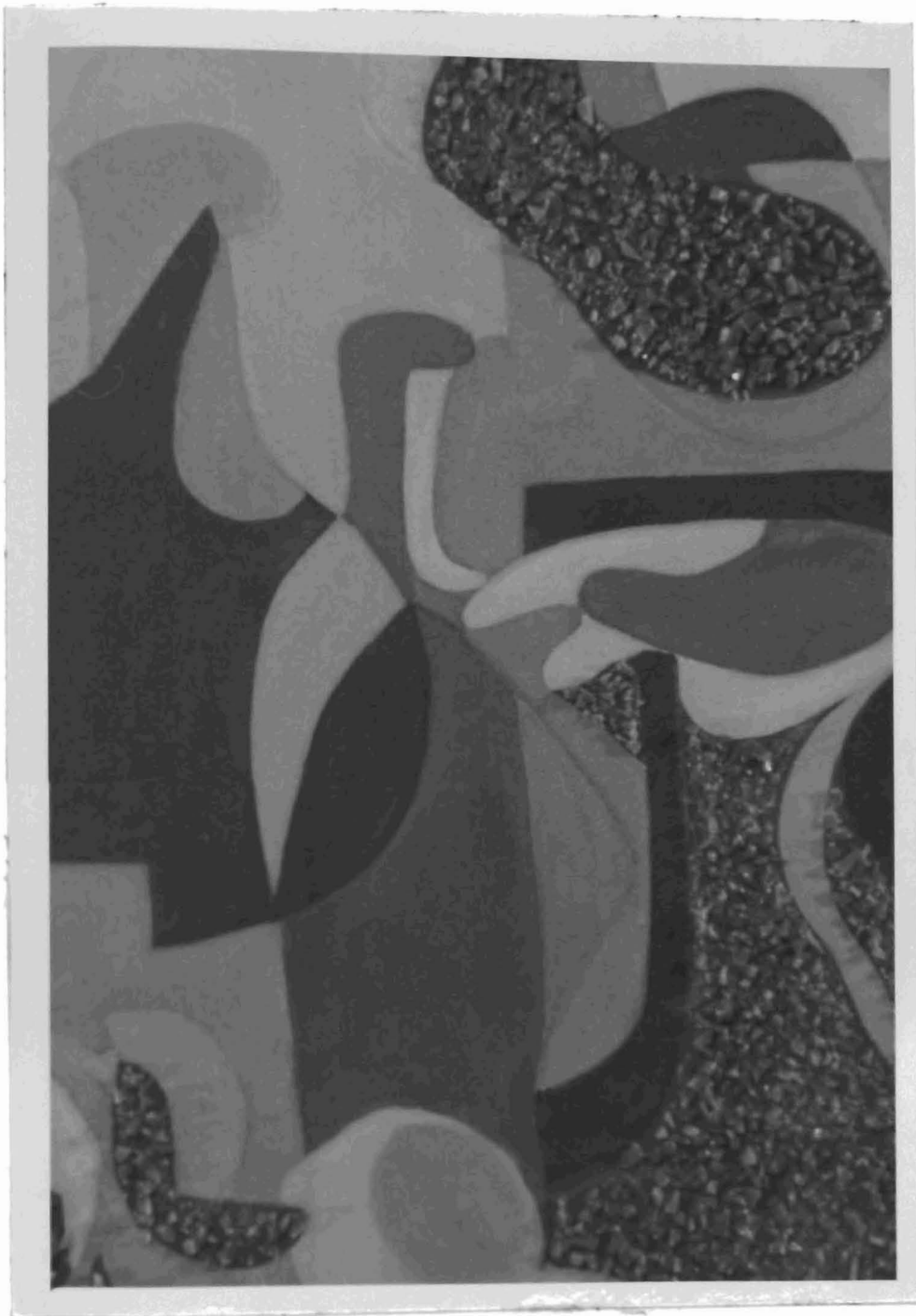


Figure 13. PEACHES AND GREEN--PITCHERS AND PURPLE.
An original oil by E. Jeanne Lighter. Oil on canvas, with
areas impregnated with glass.

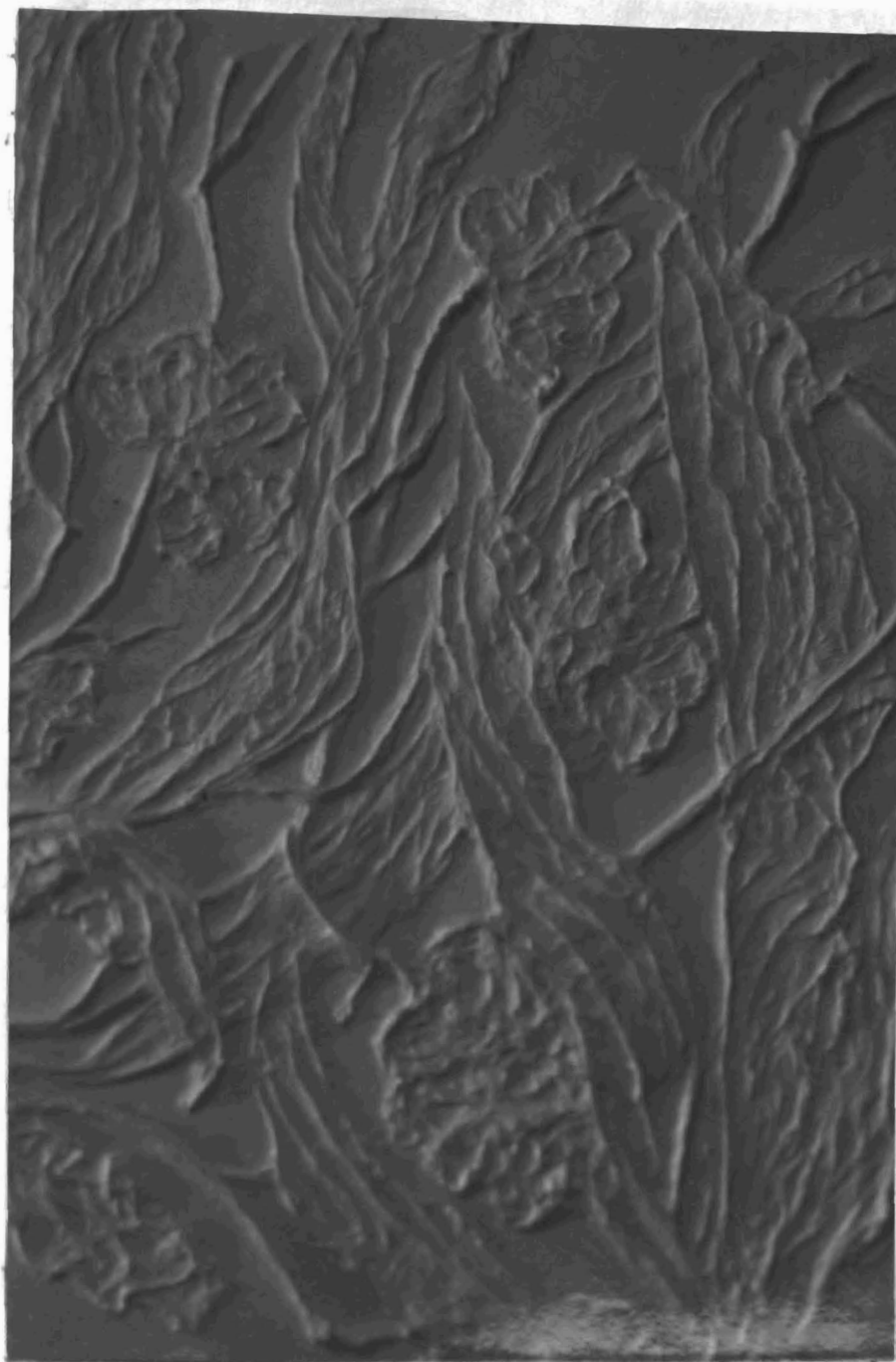


Figure 14. MONOCHROME IN DEPTH. An original oil by E. Jeanne Lighter. Gesso on formed rice paper, on Masonite. Before oil.



Figure 15. MONOCHROME IN DEPTH. An original oil
by E. Jeanne Lighter. Oil on formed rice paper, on Masonite.

This exhibition was the sixth in a series planned to convey the scope and diversity of contemporary paintings from many countries.

Figure 16 is a section of the painting WALL OF BIRDS, a painting of mixed media on board by Ryonosuke Shimomura. It was found to be most intriguing to a number of local artists. Visibly, it appears to be of rice paper built into relief. The amount of paint that was used is indeed doubtful, however, the texture was the point of interest at this time.

In conducting a research of original works by artists who achieved unusual textures through materials or methods of application, it was learned that Dixie Parker, Assistant Education Director of the Des Moines Art Center was conducting a course in painting: abstract and non-objective. The class had been experimenting with materials similar to those used in WALL OF BIRDS (Figure 16). Thus, with even greater enthusiasm, MONOCHROME IN DEPTH (Figure 15) was created. From three of the students in the class (Mrs. Edna Dahl, Mrs. Thelma Perdue, and Mrs. Elsie Temple) who were completing paintings of this type, it was learned that a rigid ground such as fibre board or masonite was suitable. A piece of 24 x 30 inch masonite, braced to prevent warping found in preliminary tests, was used and given one fairly

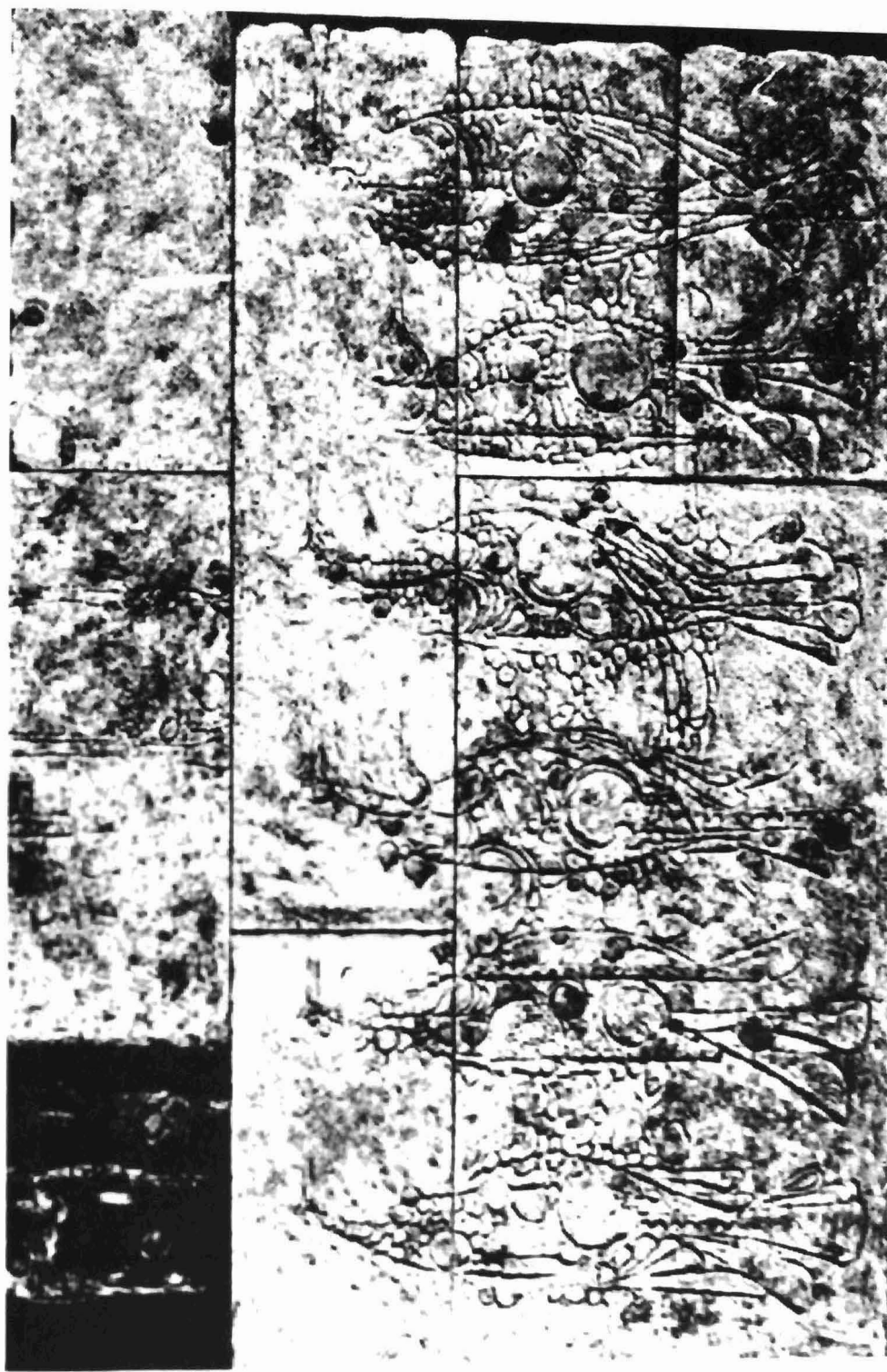


Figure 16. WALL OF BIRDS by Shemonura Ryonosuke. (Contemporary Japanese painting mixed media on board).

heavy coat of gesso. The subject matter, an original drawing of an artificial flower arrangement in an over-all repeated design was transferred to scale on the board. For fear of charcoal smudging, a sharp tool was used to cut through the gesso to expose the brown color of the masonite. Dry wheat paste powder mixed with water to a thick consistency was used to saturate strips of rice paper and heavier pulp paper. Excess paste was removed and paper texture applied and shaped. When the drawing had been completely covered and shaped the board was allowed to remain flat to dry. The drying process took several days.

The preliminary plans were for the painting to be light in color. It was therefore necessary to give the entire textured board a coat of gesso. When this was dry, preparations were made to cover the entire design and background with a large piece of rice paper. Using a two-inch paint brush, the wheat paste was brushed over the surface of the board and design, the rice paper was placed on top; and wheat paste again brushed on, this time over the whole sheet of rice paper. The paper was shaped over the texture starting from the center and working toward the outer edges. A pin was used to release the air pockets, and the rice paper was fit as tightly to the texture as possible. After this had dried, another covering of gesso was made to insure

against any adverse effects the oil pigment might have on the water soluble paste and paper. When the gesso was dry, the board was then placed on the easel for painting. A near monochrome color pattern was decided on with only a slight suggestion of color variations diferenciating the soft brown flowers, green leaves and beige-grey background.

On the subject of the oil pigment, it was decided to use a regular of artists colors and to use a mixture of the colors in the proportions of 100 parts of the oil pigment to 100 parts of the water soluble paste. The reason for this is that a lack of the mixture should be avoided.

The planning of the colors of the oil pigment was the first step in the process. The colors were selected and the texture of the oil pigment was decided. The texture of the oil pigment should be soft and felt, and should draw attention. And the type of said texture placement must be carefully placed. Large areas of texture should be avoided.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The planning and executing of four original contemporary still-life paintings stressing textural techniques, which was the creative project discussed in this report, led to many conclusions. Extreme difficulty was met in obtaining books or information pertaining to the experiments or results of artists having used inert materials combined with their pigments for textural purposes. Thus, the first conclusion is that a book of this nature should be written!

The planning time for each of the four paintings took considerably longer than might ordinarily have been expected. The addition of actual texture that can be seen and felt, enhances and draws attention, and thus the type of said texture placement must be carefully planned. Large areas of texture placement must be carefully planned. Large areas of texture need to be balanced by less textural areas if the over-all effect is to be harmonious. The time spent may prove to be most rewarding.

Whether or not the desired texture will be attained by the inert materials to the pigment or if the surface or ground will have over-all texture are a few of the beginning steps to such inventive pictures. Just as a portrait would

not be painted with a palette knife or an atmospheric effect be rendered by flat painting, the subject matter also needs to be considered. If the foreign material is to be exposed, its color is also of importance.

The application will differ greatly, but principles of visual esthetics for all art are the same. In general it's a dual process of mind and emotion.

It is somewhat comforting to realize that no single extreme in art can last.¹ In the sixteenth century, during the upheaval of the Reformation in Northern Europe, especially in Holland, the Commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image," banned all Biblical pictures and even mythological or historical pictures in the homes or in the churches.² Due to the religion, genre developed as the outcome which deals in a relative manner with the everyday happenings. Portraiture became popular, as did landscapes and still-life painting. The famous satirist of England, William Hogarth, and the great Spanish master Goya, were two of the most successful painters of later times.³ The middle

¹Ralph Fabri, "The Development of Conversation Pieces," Today's Art, VII (March 1959), 6.

²John Henry Weaver, Sr., "Art Conflicts Are Not New," Today's Art, VII (March 1959), 6.

³Ibid., pp. 7 and 14.

class took great interest in art because it was easily understood. Eventually, however, Impressionism superseded, and today many other types of art are prevalent.¹

Be it in reference to subject matter, abstract or representational art, the last word has not been said, so, try everything!

¹Ibid., p. 14.

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